

the vaster for mist and cloud; but the
village brook, the
woodland pool, need clarity to be at their
best. From
Libraries and *Villages* and *Boroughs* he
passed more and
more to tales of individual lives—from the
general to the
particular, from the static to the dynamic.
Even in his
earlier work the most vital passages had
been, apart from
the landscapes, the sketches of characters
like Phoebe
Dawson or the Widow Goe; and the later
letters of the
Borough are indistinguishable from the
Tales.

In these it is not the plots that are striking
—they are
adequate, seldom more; a village girl is
seduced by a foot-
man, a village coquette passes through all
the slow stages
from ballroom to almshouse, a young man
is entrapped
by a young minx in a nobleman's
household. What
remains outstanding is the truth of detail in
the characters;
especially the pictures of degeneration,
'litde by litde'—
for instance, the prim Parish Clerk, a sort of
Malvolio,
who stoops in the end to steal from the
offertory-bag.
Such gradual progresses of a soul, upward
or downward,
are too long to quote; but Crabbe's gift of
catching a
situation or a human type in a couplet or so
lends itself
better to the purpose. There is, for
instance, the lovers'
quarrel:

The youth, repulsed, to one more mild
convey'd
His heart, and smiTd on the remorseless
maid;
The maid, remorseless in her pride, the while
Despis'd die insult and returned the smile;

or the village gossips:

Theirs is that art, which English wives alone
Profess—a boast and privilege their own—
When they engage the tongue, the eye, the
ear,
Reply when listening, and when speaking,
hear;

or the charity-boy in the workhouse:

There was he pinch'd and pitied, thump'd
and fed,
And duly took his beatings and his bread;